

AFRICAN MOSQUITO RAVAGING BRAZIL

Rockefeller Fund Reports It
Killed 10% of Population in
Some Areas Last Year

U. S. INVASION IS FEARED

Until 1930 *Anopheles Gambiae*,
Malaria Carrier, Was Unknown
on This Side of Atlantic

The ravages of the mosquito *anopheles gambiae*, which in 1938 killed 10 per cent of the population of certain districts in Brazil and which may eventually reach North America, were described in a report of the Rockefeller Foundation made public yesterday.

According to the report, the *anopheles gambiae* is the most dangerous member of the mosquito family. In 1938 it infected with malaria 90 per cent of the inhabitants in the Jaguaribe Valley of the State of Ceará in Brazil, with a mortality rate of 10 per cent in certain districts, and caused disruption of the normal life of the communities to the extent that virtually every person in the affected areas will be on government relief this year, the report asserted.

"If Orson Welles, in his now famous broadcast of Oct. 30, 1938, had announced not that the Martians had landed in New Jersey but that a mosquito called *anopheles gambiae*, a native of Africa, had arrived on the American Continent there would have been no public alarm," the report said.

A Dangerous Invader

"Indeed, it is doubtful if there would have been any public interest. But *anopheles gambiae* is potentially a much more dangerous invader than the Martians would have been."

The report said that the mosquito is the scourge of Central Africa and is a carrier of a serious and often fatal type of malaria.

"Until 1930 this species of mosquito was not known on this side of the Atlantic," the report said. "In that year, however, or shortly before, it crossed the ocean, apparently by airplane or on one of

the fast French destroyers which at that time were working in connection with the French airlines between Dakar in West Africa and Natal in Brazil.

"The species was first discovered within the city limits of Natal by Dr. Raymond C. Shannon, a member of the foundation's staff, during a routine mosquito survey in connection with the yellow fever survey. The seriousness of its presence was immediately recognized, but it was hoped that the invasion might be localized by natural conditions unfriendly to the invader."

50,000 Infected by Insect

Describing conditions in the Jaguaribe Valley, the report asserted that more than 50,000 cases were reported in 1938.

"Fortunately, through the work of the foundation's staff and others in Africa, much is known about the *gambiae*. It breeds prolifically and rapidly, requiring only seven or eight days to develop from egg to adult, a fact that makes breeding possible in very temporary water collections. It has variable breeding habits, but seems to prefer stagnant, sunlit water.

"It has a high infection rate. During the outbreak in the city of Natal in 1930 62.8 per cent of 172 specimens of *gambiae* caught and dissected were found to be infected with malaria, a rate higher than anything hitherto known in the Americas."

The danger of the mosquito advancing toward North America was discussed as follows in the report:

"If the *gambiae* should break through the well-watered Parnahyba and Sao Francisco River valleys, it is feared that it would be impossible to prevent its spread to a large part of South, Central and perhaps even North America. The Parnahyba Valley is 500 miles from Natal; the *gambiae* mosquitoes are already nearly half-way there."